

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1-18. (Canceled)

Claim 19. (Previously Presented) A method for providing antimicrobial properties to a composite item, comprising:

immersing a composite item in an aqueous bath comprising an organic antimicrobial agent, wherein said organic antimicrobial agent is silicone based quaternary ammonium salt that is a copolymer of a long chain (C₁₂-C₂₀) alkyldimethylaminotrihydroxysilylpropyl ammonium halide and a chloroalkyltrihydroxysilane;

separating the immersed composite item from the bath; and

drying the separated composite item at a temperature of from 50-90°C,

wherein the composite item is a member selected from the group consisting of composite yarns, composite fabrics and composite articles;

wherein the resulting composite item retains antimicrobial properties for at least 40 wash cycles;

wherein the antimicrobial properties can be regenerated after one or more uses by contacting the treated item with a hypochlorite solution.

Claim 20. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 19, further comprising the step of reusing the bath in a further immersing step on a different composite item.

Claim 21. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 19, wherein said composite item is a composite yarn.

Claim 22. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 19, wherein said composite item is a composite fabric.

Claim 23. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 19, wherein said composite item is a composite article.

Claim 24. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 23, wherein said composite article is a member selected from the group consisting of gloves, aprons, socks, filters, shirts, pants, undergarments, and one-piece jumpsuits.

Claim 25. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21, wherein said process is a continuous process.

Claim 26. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21, wherein said process is a batch process and said composite yarn is in a form of composite yarn wound on a bobbin.

Claim 27. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 22, wherein said process is a continuous process.

Claim 28. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 22, wherein said process is a batch process and said composite fabric is in a form of composite fabric wound on a roll.

Claim 29. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 19, wherein said organic antimicrobial agent is present in said bath in an amount of from 0.1-2 % by weight of the total bath.

Claim 30. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 19, wherein said silicone based quaternary ammonium salt is a copolymer of octadecylaminodimethyltrihydroxysilylpropyl ammonium chloride and chloropropyltrihydroxysilane.

Claim 31. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 23, wherein said immersing step is performed in a household clothes washer and said drying step is performed in a household clothes dryer.

Claim 32. (Cancelled).

Claim 33. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 19, wherein said drying step is performed at a temperature of from 70-90°C.

Claim 34. (Previously Presented) A composite item selected from the group consisting of composite yarns, composite fabrics and composite articles, having antimicrobial properties and prepared by the method of claim 19.